

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

10 December 2021 EUR 46/5092/2021

# RUSSIAN FEDERATION: RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES SHOULD STOP THE PERSECUTION OF KEY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION, MEMORIAL

Memorial, a cornerstone of Russian civil society, is under threat of liquidation by the Russian authorities on baseless charges. Memorial's two entities - Memorial Human Rights Centre and International Memorial Society - were [labeled](#) "foreign agents" in 2014 and 2016, respectively. In November 2021, prosecutors filed lawsuits for their liquidation, accusing both of not adhering to the repressive "foreign agents" legislation which stigmatises activism and is contrary to Russia's international human rights obligations. They have also accused Memorial Human Rights Centre of "justifying terrorism and extremism." The court hearings are ongoing at the time when this statement is issued: the next hearing for International Memorial will take place on 14 December, the next preliminary hearing for Memorial Human Rights Centre – on 16 December. At stake is the organisation's very existence and its staff's ability to continue their human rights work.

Today, on the Human Rights Day, we, the undersigned human rights organisations, strongly condemn the persecution of the two Memorials. We call on the Russian authorities to end their harassment of and threats to these and other civil society organisations. The authorities should abide by their international obligations to respect human rights and immediately repeal the "foreign agents" legislation.

It is difficult to overstate the urgency of ensuring that the two Memorial entities can continue their crucial work protecting human rights. Memorial is at the very heart of Russia's civil society, and by targeting it, authorities are hoping to destroy Russia's civil society at large.

On 11 and 12 November, Memorial was informed that prosecutors had filed lawsuits demanding the dissolution of [International Memorial Society](#) and [Memorial Human Rights Centre](#). The lawsuits were grounded in the prosecutor's allegation of Memorial's "repeated failure" to identify themselves publicly as a "foreign agents," which, prosecutors said, amounted to "systematic violation" of the "foreign agents" legislation.

In addition, the prosecutors claim that Memorial Human Rights Centre's materials contain signs of "justifying terrorism and extremism," including of the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir and Artpodgotovka. Both groups are banned in Russia. Memorial Human Rights Centre [recognised](#) some of the members of these groups as political prisoners, stating that Russian authorities utilised counter-terrorism and counter-extremism laws to crack down on freedom of association and expression. In its statements, Memorial emphasised that "recognition of an individual as a political prisoner" does not imply that the organisation "agrees with or approves of their views, statements, or actions."

Memorial is the largest human rights and research centre focusing on political persecution committed during the Soviet era and in contemporary Russia. International Memorial documents the history of Soviet-era political repression and commemorates and promotes rehabilitation of victims. Memorial Human Rights Centre addresses, among other things, human rights violations in the North Caucasus, and provides support for victims of politically motivated persecution.

The Russian authorities' attempts to shut down Memorial and its entities is a blatant assault on human rights. Memorial should be allowed to continue its work, and Russian authorities should stop their baseless

attacks on freedom of association and expression, including by immediately repealing the “foreign agents” legislation.

*Amnesty International*

*Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum*

*Civil Rights Defenders*

*Civic Assistance Committee (designated a “foreign agent” by Russia’s Justice Ministry)*

*Committee Against Torture*

*Conflict Analysis and Prevention Center*

*Front Line Defenders*

*Human Rights Watch*

*International Federation for Human Rights*

*Norwegian Helsinki Committee*

*Rights in Russia*